



A NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

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Mr. James P. Acosta
Chairman

MEMORANDUM

Dr. Juan Herrera
National Executive Director

TO : Members of all ASPIRA Boards of Directors
and Executive Directors

FROM : Juan Herrera, *JRH*
National Executive Director

DATE : September 17, 1988

SUBJECT: 1) Student's testimony before the U.S. House
of Representatives, Select Committee on
Children, Youth and Families

2) Letter to Senators urging support English
Proficiency Act

For your information, I am enclosing a copy of the testimony Mr. Yvonne Herrera, a seventeen year old ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program Alumnus, will deliver before the U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families on September 18, 1988. ASPIRA National staff assisted Mr. Herrera in the preparation of this testimony. We see Yvonne's testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives as an opportunity for young ASPIRANTES to be involved in public policy development at the national level.

Additionally, please find a copy of the letter, which ASPIRA of America, Inc., along with 33 other Hispanic, Asian and Educational organizations sent to all Senators urging them to support the English Proficiency Act to be introduced on September 18, 1988. You will remember that ASPIRA of America, Inc. also supported the companion bill which was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 3042).

Thank you for your continued support on this and other issues.



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

PRESENTED BY:

YVONNE MARRERO
ASPIRA PUBLIC POLICY LEADERSHIP FELLOW
SEPTEMBER 18, 1986

Good morning. Honorable members of the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families; Chairman Miller. My name is Yvonne Marrero. I am a resident of Brooklyn, New York. I am testifying before you as a senior year student attending Edward R. Murrow high school in Brooklyn, New York. It is an honor for me to have this opportunity to share my personal experience and views on youth today. I wish to take this opportunity to commend each of you for the foresight and concern you have demonstrated by holding this hearing.

Some problems I see facing youth today are school pressure, peer pressure and family pressure. These sometimes cause youth to think of society in a negative way and therefore move against it. Unfortunately, in some cases, youth might experience these pressures with a critical outcome leading to drugs abuse, teenage pregnancy, alcohol abuse, and dropping out of high school.

As a Puerto Rican who was born in New York but raised in Puerto Rico during my early years, I can say that to deal with school has not been as easy. At the age of eleven, my parents moved back to New York. I was almost an adolescent and could not speak a word of English. Fortunately, I was placed into a bilingual program which followed the regulation as stated in the Act and it worked. I took the main subjects in my native language and a period of the day was dedicated to English as a second language. As time went on more English was introduced to the curriculum and as a result, I was on grade level with the other students by eighth grade. By the time I graduated from

eighth grade I achieved the honor of being named valedictorian. Today, thanks to bilingual education, I am fluent in both languages. As a senior high school student, I have a 92 average and rank 40th out of 750 students.

Unfortunately, there are many students like me with the same or even more potential who will not graduate from high school or make it to college.

The drop out rate for high school students in the New York public school system is estimated at 88%. I feel this rate is due in part to the fact that the educational system is not being administered in the right way, by the right people, with the right intentions. As a result, many of the students who should be enrolled are not and are sometimes misplaced in special education courses due to the language problems.

Given the condition of Hispanic education today, we can ill afford to allow this pattern to continue. Limited English proficient youth need more educational opportunities. Educational policy needs to be targeted and tailored to better meet the educational needs of today's Hispanic youth. I urge you to focus your attention on creating better educational alternatives for youth today.

Organizations that work with youth can make a difference in addressing problems which youth face. I personally have benefited from a youth oriented program. I participated in ASPERA of New York's programs. This makes me an Aspirante. An Aspirante is someone who has gone through the ASPERA process and ⁵ have learned to value himself or herself as a person.

The ideals of ASPIRA are rooted in the promise that Hispanics possess the collective potential to develop the community's human and material resources to equitably share in the benefits and responsibilities of the larger society. In promoting these ideals, ASPIRA is committed to developing and nurturing the leadership, intellectual, and cultural potential of Hispanic youth so that they may dedicate their skills to improving conditions in their community.

Through the many different programs and services that ASPIRA offers we expand our knowledge and grow as individuals by testing ourselves and learning the value of our community. Through ASPIRA I became more aware of where I am today and where I am heading. As a result of ASPIRA's Health Careers Program I became more aware of medical and health professional careers. I am now seriously considering medicine as a career.

ASPIRA has been offering services to Hispanic youth for 25 years. Besides the ASPIRA office in New York, ASPIRA has offices in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Florida, Puerto Rico and its national office in Washington, D.C.

It is up to elected officials to ensure that funding is given to programs such as ASPIRA that have made a positive impact on youth. Decisions made today will affect the outcome of tomorrow's future.

Moral values are important today for youth in order to to make independent decisions. This must be reinforced in school, community and in the home. Although neither my mother nor father graduated from high school, they instilled in my family

brothers and sisters and see the value of education and self respect. Currently I live in a single parent household. Although we sometimes have economic problems, we are a united family that has mutual concern for each other. In conclusion, I would like to say that my achievements have been due to the discipline and values which my family has given me. I strongly feel that the institution of the family must also be the focus of our national policy.

Mr. Chairman and Members, I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. I appreciate your interest in youth and I leave you with the challenge to ensure a better tomorrow for our youth. I shall be glad to answer any questions you may have.